

Certified Operator Required for Most Water Systems

Certified Operator Required

The Department of Health (DOH) requires that a certified operator be responsible for the daily operational activities of the following “Group A” water systems:

- Community systems.
- Nontransient noncommunity systems (NTNC).
- Transient noncommunity systems (TNC) classified as significant non-compliers.
- TNC systems using a surface water source or groundwater under the influence (GWI) of surface water source.

Systems that do not have a certified operator may:

- Have their current operator certified by taking the appropriate examination.
- Hire a contract operator.
- Contract with an approved satellite management agency (SMA).

System Classification: Distribution and/or Treatment

For the purposes of determining system certification requirements, water systems are classified as “distribution” and/or “treatment.” The distribution classification is based on the number of people served. The treatment classification is based on the complexity of the treatment processes and other factors.

- Group A water systems serving 250 or fewer people, and classified as distribution only, require an operator certified as a water distribution *specialist* (WDS).

- Group A water systems serving more than 250 people, and classified as distribution only, require an operator(s) certified as a water distribution *manager* (WDM). The level of WDM certification is based on the number of people served.
- Group A water systems with treatment will be classified by the Division of Drinking Water regional office. The Water Works Operator Certification Program will then contact the water system regarding the additional certification requirement.

Certified Operator Responsibilities

The operation of a public water system includes many duties and responsibilities that are necessary to protect public health. Following are some of the typical duties of the certified operator:

- Ensure that all daily operation and maintenance activities of the water system are completed in accordance with acceptable public health practices and water industry standards.
- Perform water quality monitoring, maintain adequate records, and take follow-up action, if necessary, to comply with state and federal drinking water regulations.
- Implement preventative maintenance programs, inspect treatment and other system components for malfunctions, make needed repairs, and keep adequate records.
- Analyze/ review recording instrument readings and laboratory tests, determine sites and causes of any malfunctions, adjust various treatment processes or other components accordingly, and keep records of each action.
- Implement a cross-connection control program.
- Determine remedial actions in emergencies, and be available 24 hours a day.

Publications

Chapter 70.119 RCW,
“Public Water Supply Systems – Operators”

Chapter 246-292 WAC,
“Water Works Operator Certification Regulations”

For More Information

Water Works Operator
Certification Program
P.O. Box 47822
Olympia, WA 98504-7822
360-236-3141 or 800-525-2536



Certified Water Works Operators

Protecting Public Health

*The Department of Health is an equal opportunity agency.
For persons with disabilities, this document is available
on request in other formats. To submit a request,
please call 800-525-0127 (TTY 800-833-6388).*

*For additional copies of this publication,
call 800-521-0323. This and other publications
are available at www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw.*

Certification Options

Requesting a Temporary Operator Certification

If a system hires an operator who is not certified or not certified at the appropriate level, the system may be eligible for a temporary certification, if Division of Drinking Water criteria have been met. Only one temporary certification may be issued in each instance of any position vacancy and it may be valid for up to 12 months (normally from the date the position became vacant). To request a temporary certification the system must submit the following:

- A letter requesting temporary certification for the operator.
- The temporary certification application completed and signed by the operator and completion of the signature block on the application by the authorized water system representative.
- The affidavit of employment completed and signed by an authorized water system representative.
- An application fee.

Satellite Management Agency

Satellite management agencies can provide skilled and affordable operational services to water systems. A satellite management agency owns or operates several water systems throughout a region and is approved by DOH. The systems operated by these firms are usually not physically interconnected and are not part of a central water system. For information about approved satellite management agencies, contact your Division of Drinking Water regional planner or call 800-521-0323.

Contract Operator

By definition, a contract operator is responsible for the daily operational activities of three or more public water systems. Certified operators who are responsible for three or more water systems must be certified as a **Cross Connection Control Specialist** and as a **Water Distribution Manager 1** or higher (certification level is based on the size of the largest water system). Other types of certification may be required, depending on individual system requirements.

Contract operators are required to submit two copies of all signed operations contracts to DOH, Water Works Operator Certification Program, within 30 days of the effective date of their contract with the water system. The contract must be a written agreement that includes the following:

- Operator’s name and certification number.
- Date contract will begin and end.
- List of duties to be performed by contract operator.
- Signature of water system representative.
- Signature of contract operator.
- Date agreement is signed.

Internet Listing of Certified Contract Operators

All DOH approved contract operators who have requested to be listed are found at www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/Our_Main_Pages/opcertification.htm. Operators who meet the minimum contract operator requirements and wish to be added to the DOH-approved list should contact the Water Works Operator Certification Program.

Operator Certification and Renewal

Application and Examination

To become certified, applicants must meet minimum education and experience requirements, and pass an examination. Applicants are required to submit an application and appropriate fees. Examinations are given three times per year in numerous locations within the state.

Renewal

Each November, an annual renewal notice is sent out to all certified operators. Each operator must review their information, make any necessary corrections on the form, and return the renewal form and fee postmarked by the renewal deadline date. *Operators failing to renew their certification will have their certification inactivated, and to achieve certification they must apply as a new operator.*



Professional Growth Requirements for Certified Operators

All certified operators must demonstrate professional growth acceptable to DOH within the designated professional growth reporting period. *Operators who fail to meet the professional growth requirement will have their certification inactivated, and to achieve certification must apply as a new operator.*

To meet the professional growth requirement, each certified operator must accomplish one of the following:

- Accumulate a minimum of three continuing education units (CEU) or college credits for training that is directly relevant to the operation, maintenance, or management of a water system, and that has an influence on water quality, water supply, or public health protection.
- Advance by examination in the Water Works Operator Certification Program to a level 2, 3, or 4, or achieve certification by examination as defined in the Water Works Operator Certification regulations.

For more information about the professional growth requirement, contact Washington Environmental Training Center (WETRC) at 800-562-0858.